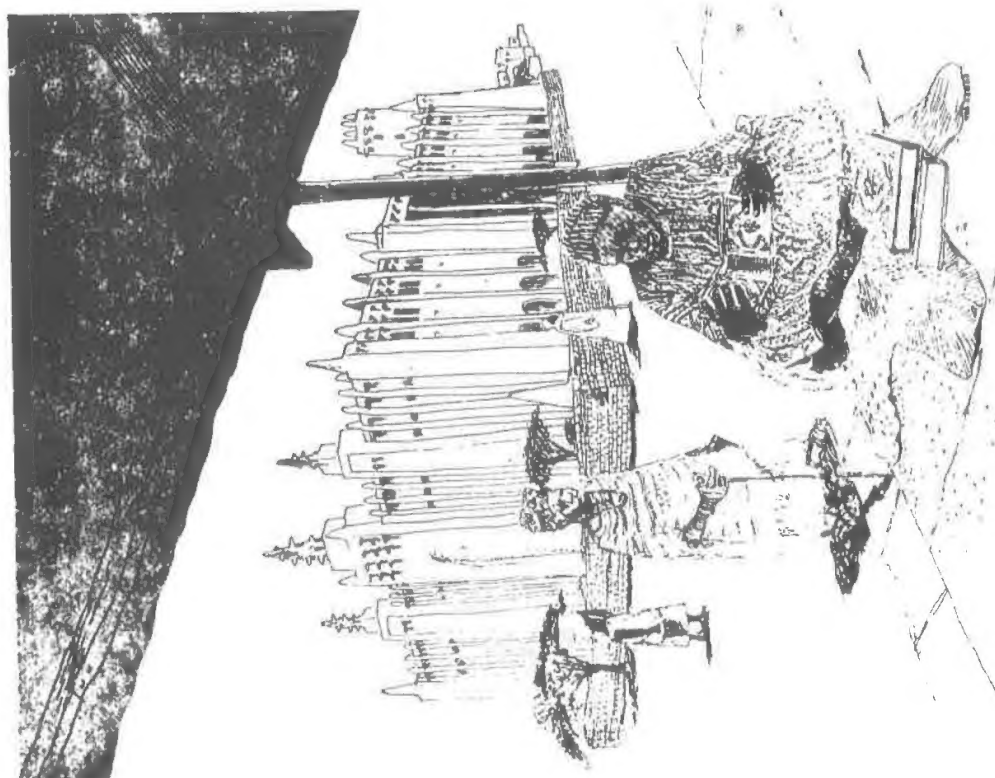
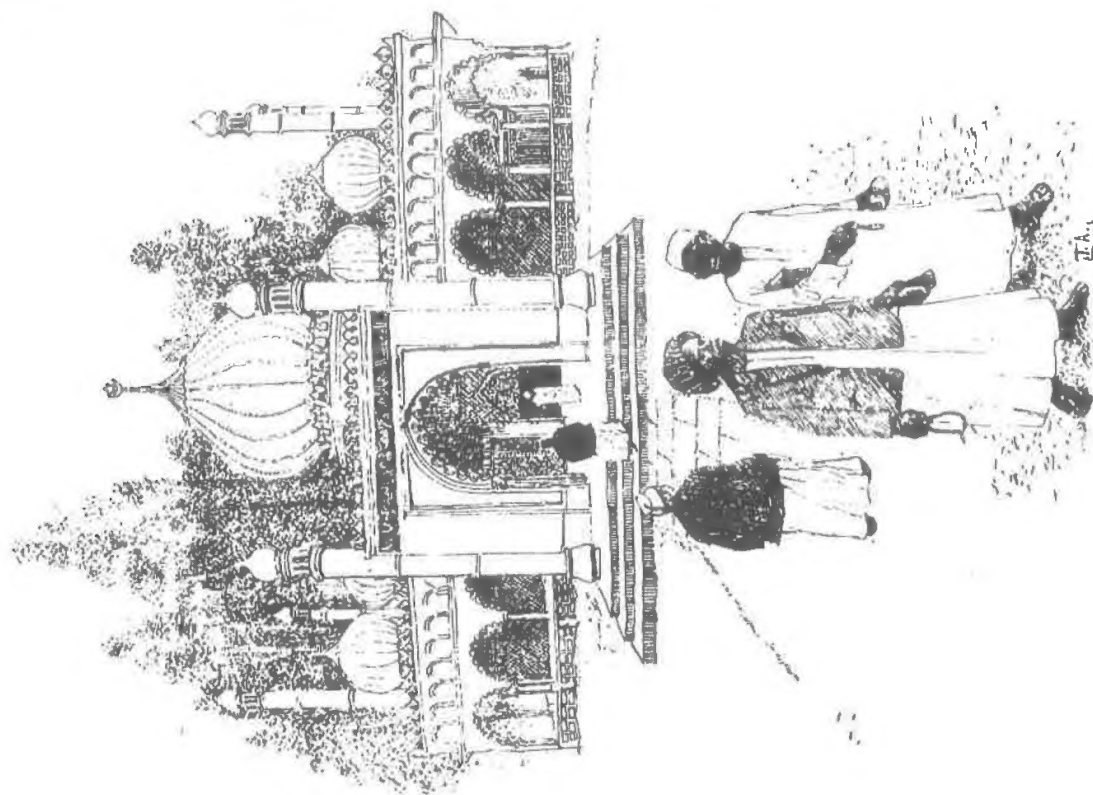


Thanks to the efforts and sufferings of these early Muslims, Islam is the most dominant religion of the African Continent.



The world famous wood and clay Great Mosque of Djienne, built sometime during the fourteenth century, in what is present-day Mali.



A modern East African Mosque, built in 1956 at Wandegaya, Kampala, Uganda, by the African Muslims of Uganda.

(From Islam Insurgent by Prof T B Irving)

LESSON 9

PERSECUTION AND FIRST HIJRAH

Most of the early converts to Islam were slaves, orphans, and widows, who were badly treated by the Makkans. They accepted Islam because Islam taught fairness and equality for all. These poor people didn't have influence or power, so by accepting Islam they exposed themselves to the anger of their masters. They belonged to an underprivileged class, and by becoming Muslims they suffered even more at the hands of the *Kuffar*. Their conversion was not only a challenge to the pagan faith, but also a revolt against an unjust social order.

[To stop the Muslims from worshipping Allah, the *Kuffar*, under the leadership of Abu Jahl and Rasulullah's uncle, Abu Lahab, tortured them in every possible way. Sometimes they put the Muslims on burning sand and placed hot stones on their chests. They would punish the Muslims by dipping them in hot water. They placed ropes around their necks and dragged them in the streets. The Muslims were stoned and beaten mercilessly. The names of Bilal (R), Yassir (R), his wife Sumayyah (R) and son Ammar (R), Khabbab (R), Suhaib (R) and Abu Fuhaiha (R), will always be remembered with great love by Muslims because of their sufferings.

Rasulullah (S) himself suffered all kinds of insults. Thorns were placed in his way. Garbage, dirt, and smelly camels' intestines were thrown at him. People laughed and mocked him. Rasulullah (S) and the Muslims remained patient and prayed to Allah for help.

As the opposition of the *Kuffar* to Islam increased, Rasulullah (S) advised some of the Muslims to migrate and seek refuge in the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia (also called Ethiopia). The Christians believed in Allah. They were the "People of the Book" (*Ahl al-Kitab*). That means they received divine revelation and gospels, and they were the *Ummah* of prophet Isa (A). By sending Makkan Muslims to a Christian Kingdom Rasulullah (S) showed that relationship in Islam is not based on ties of family, race or language but on ties of common faith and common hopes. Rasulullah (S) hoped the Christian king would protect the Muslims. On Rasulullah's advice a party of eleven men and five women migrated to Abyssinia.

The *Kuffar* had business ties in Abyssinia and carried some influence in the court. They followed the Muslims there also. They wanted to catch the Muslims

to punish them for their escape. They requested King Najashi to hand over the Muslims to them.

King Najashi (Negus) of Abyssinia was a pious Christian. He was not influenced by the plea of the *Kuffar* and decided to talk to the Muslims about their Prophet (S) and their religion. [The Muslims chose Jafar (R) to represent them before the king. He went to the royal court and explained to the king:

We walked in the darkness of evil and did not know the right path. We worshipped idols of stone and led unclean lives. We had no respect for human beings, neighbors, or guests. We used to kill and steal. Allah has been kind to us and sent his prophet. We know him very well, he is kind, truthful, trustworthy, and pious. He invited us to Islam. He taught us *Tawhid*, the worship of Allah alone. He teaches us to speak the truth and to keep our trust, to respect the rights of our women and orphans, our poor and our neighbors. We believed in Muhammad as a Prophet. We are Muslims. Because of the acceptance of the truth of Islam our own people have become our enemies. They persecuted us in Makkah and now they have followed us here. They want to kill us because of our faith.]

[The king was very impressed by the speech. He asked the Muslims to recite the Quran. They recited some verses from *Surah Maryam* 19:1-36 about the birth of Yahya(A) and Isa(R). The king was very moved. He refused to surrender the Muslims to *Kuffar*. They were very disappointed. The *Kuffar* held consultations at night. They knew how the teachings of Islam about Isa (A) and his mission are different from the Christian doctrines. So they decided to inform the king of the Muslims' belief about Isa (A). They hoped this way the king will become disillusioned with Muslims and will expell them.

The next day the Makkan leaders again went to King Najashi and told him, "The Muslims do not believe in the divinity of Jesus and have very different ideas about the Christian doctrines."

The king invited the Muslims once again. Jafar (R) presented the Muslims' position on the status of Jesus in Islam thus, "Rasulullah has taught us that Jesus is a servant of God and His messenger. His spirit and His word breathed into virgin Mary."

The king was very impressed with Rasulullah's teachings. He replied, "We believe the same. Blessed be you and your Prophet."

He asked the *Kuffar* to leave his kingdom and promised the Muslims safety under his protection.

The king watched the Muslims and saw how different they were from other Makkans. Slowly he became convinced of the truth of Islam. After some time, he himself became a Muslim. Later, more Muslims went to Abyssinia. In all, eighty-three Muslims are reported to have migrated to Abyssinia.

Points of review:

1. The *Kuffar* persecuted the Muslims and Rasulullah (S) for their faith.
2. Many Muslims migrated to Abyssinia to seek refuge.
2. The *Kuffar* followed the Muslims to Abyssinia but the king of Abyssinia, Najashi, gave refuge to the Muslims, and he himself accepted Islam.

Words to remember

Ahl al-Kitab, disillusion, pagan-faith, plea, refuge, under-privileged.

Important names

Abu Fukaiha (R), Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab, Ammar (R), Bilal (R), Jafar (R), Khabbab (R), King Najashi, Suhaib (R), Sumayyah (R), Yassir (R).

Quranic Study

Read *Surah Maryam* 19:16-35. See how the Quran describes the birth of Isa(A). In what way does this description differ from the Christian doctrines of the "divinity of Christ."